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Bill Lovejoy/Sentir

Guillermo Aranda sketches the mural Thursday morning for the now open transit center in Watsonvill

New Watsonville bus center pleases riders

By MARIANNE BIASOTTI
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Regular bus riders were pleased to finally have a place to sit while waiting for their ride in downtown Watsonville.

Almost 100 buses on Thursday picked up and dropped off passengers at the recently completed Watsonville Transit Center on Rodriguez Street, between West Lake Avenue and West Beach Street. Some 60 buses went to North County through the Santa Cruz Metropolitan District, while 35 others went to Salinas.

"It's really beautiful," said Watsonville resident Delfina Peralta, 7, as she sat on a bench under a rust-colored roof. She said it was quite a change from the temporary bus station next door that had two benches and a small tarp covering.

> 'It's really beautiful'
>
> — *Delfina Peralta, 17*
> *Watsonville resident*

"At times we had to stand there for 15 minutes, or even 30 minutes," Peralta said.

But the grand opening of the $1.7 million station won't be until Oct. 20. By that date, station manager Wallace Berry said he expects the main building to open with a convenience store and postal and shipping outlet. Three tenants likely will occupy the outdoor kiosks, which will include a coffee and pizza stand. An official contract that puts a mini-McDonald's in the main terminal building is pending.

Also slated for completion by th grand opening is a mural that ru the length of the station. The theme the artwork is "United by Pride, Di nity and Knowledge We Heal."

About 40 youths from around t Pajaro Valley started working on t mural Tuesday, and by Thursda they had chalk etchings of figures ar a grid 137 squares long.

The Prevention Partnership Mur Project is being funded by the Cent for Substance Abuse Prevention ar is under the direction of Pajaro Valle muralist Guillermo Aranda.

The transit center was to open one year ago but was delayed when its former contractor defaulted on his contract and a new contractor was found to replace him.